

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). The Chair reminds Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

APPOINTMENT OF HON. TOM
PRICE OF GEORGIA TO ACT AS
SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE TO
SIGN ENROLLED BILLS AND
JOINT RESOLUTIONS THROUGH
APRIL 19, 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, April 14, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM PRICE to act as Speaker pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions through April 19, 2005.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the appointment is approved.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ROHRABACHER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is once again a pleasure to address the House of Representatives and also to talk about a very important issue to all Americans, which is Social Security. I would also like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group to come to the floor once again to talk about issues that are facing not only young Americans but Americans in general.

Through her leadership and through others that are in the Democratic Caucus, the Democratic whip, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER); the chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ); and also the vice chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), we have been able to come to the floor to share facts, not fiction, to bring accuracy to the Social Security debate as it stands now.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just share a few things as relates to Social Security. We encourage the

Members to continue to keep an open mind. First of all, I want to commend Members on the Democratic side of the aisle for having so many town hall meetings, a number of town hall meetings, hundreds of town hall meetings in their own districts and that have traveled outside of their districts to share with Americans the truth about Social Security and how we protect Social Security and how we continue to have the benefit structure that so many, 48 million Americans, are celebrating now today.

I must also add that I would like to commend some of my Republican colleagues that have the courage to stand up to the forces of leadership, to say that they are willing to make sure that their constituents are able to celebrate and to be able to survive in a program that they have been promised that will be there for them in their time of retirement.

I would also like to thank those Members on both sides of the aisle who see the benefit of protecting Social Security, not coming up with a privatization scheme, not because someone said it is a way that we can be innovative, not subscribing to saying that there is some sort of Federal emergency as it relates to the protection of Social Security, not the fact that the President is flying around the country some 60 days burning Federal jet fuel at taxpayers' expense, higher than at any other time in the history of this country since Presidents have been flying, to persuade Americans that there is some Federal emergency. We will try to address that a little later. We are going to celebrate not only within the moment but within the future.

I want to just share a few things, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to how many Americans that are not only beneficiaries of Social Security but also Americans who look forward to benefiting from Social Security.

Social Security is the foundation of all retirement for the American worker. Like I mentioned earlier, 48 million Americans celebrate and take part in the benefits that Social Security has to provide. Retirees receiving Social Security benefits are 33 million. That is a great number of Americans that have served our country well. Seniors who live within the poverty line, 48 percent of those individuals, of the 48 million, receive those benefits. The average monthly benefit is \$955. That is making ends meet for so many Americans, some 48 million Americans.

The size of the average benefit, like I mentioned, is \$955; but the real issue is the fact that the benefits will be there for almost 50 years. Some may say 48, some may say 49, but for almost 50 years, the present benefit structure as we see it now for Social Security recipients, including those individuals that are receiving survivor benefits that I must add, Mr. Speaker, those survivor benefits is the legacy of the commitment that their parents made that have passed on, that have gone on to glory. The only thing that they were able to leave for their child are sur-

vivor benefits. And the benefits will be here until 2052; 2052, Mr. Speaker. That is not tomorrow. That is not next week. That is not even 2 years. 2052.

And so many of the individuals that are running around here saying that we need to call the fire department because Social Security is on fire are not really telling the truth. One may say that the administration has a plan or the majority side leadership has a plan for Social Security. That is also not true. One may say that the President, like I said, the administration, has a plan. That is not true. Is there posturing on the majority side about the fact that they are going to come up with a plan? Yes, there is some conversation going on, but Washington is known for conversation. There is nothing wrong with conversation as long as it is bipartisan. And that is not happening. Leadership is about a bipartisan dialogue to improve Social Security. So if it is going to be addressed in this Congress, for us to move in a productive way, we are going to have to work together. And there is no leadership from the majority side for us to work together.

Some may say, well, where is the Democratic plan? Well, I think the Democratic plan is celebrated by 48 million Americans today, not fiction, not something that may happen in the future; and in the 1980s it was a Democratic Congress that came together with Speaker Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan and saved Social Security. A supermajority of Democrats voted for it, and even the creation of it.

So when one starts to argue about, well, where is the Democratic plan, the Democratic plan is in the wallets of 48 million Americans. And those Americans that are walking around working now with a Social Security card can say, wow, I am glad we have Social Security in the way we have it. And for those retirees that take their card out with those digits on them, they can thank the leadership of the Democratic Congress when it was created and also the Democratic Congress that saved Social Security to make sure that every American can have the maximum amount of benefits possible to them to help that 48 percent of the 48 million Americans that without Social Security would be living in poverty, to help 33 million of those retirees that are now, this is fact, not fiction, able to receive Social Security because, let us say, for instance, in that 33 million Americans, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, a number of their companies have gone back on their commitment on retirement. But Social Security is there for them. For those individuals that have passed on and gone on to glory, they were able to leave legacy benefits for their children.

Let us talk a little bit about the private accounts, because I think it is important that we talk about the privatization scheme that some people in this